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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 008957

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: OUTRAGED JORDANIANS RALLY AROUND KING AFTER HOTEL BOMBINGS; NEW ANTI-TERROR MEASURES ANNOUNCED

REF: A. AMMAN 8845 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. AMMAN 8835

[1](#)C. AMMAN 8829

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) The November 9 hotel bombings have sparked national outrage. Thousands of Jordanians have demonstrated peacefully around the country and pledged their support for King Abdullah. Polling data shows an abrupt decline in support for al-Qaeda, with a large majority (87%) now describing it as a "terrorist organization." A few voices, however, still attempt to shift responsibility for terrorism to the U.S. or Israel. The GOJ has announced new regulations aimed against foreign militants. It also intends to draft new legislation that would prohibit the promotion or justification of terrorist acts. END SUMMARY.

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POPULAR OUTCRY  
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[1](#)2. (C) Jordan is united in a mood of defiance after the November 9 terrorist bombings, with a determination to fight back and resume normal lives. Outraged Jordanians have universally condemned the attacks against three Amman hotels (refs A-C). Anger over the bombings spans the entire political spectrum, and includes groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist-led opposition parties that are critical of Jordan's close relationship with the U.S. (ref C). Post contacts ranging from senior government officials to working-class Jordanians have described the attacks as "senseless," "cowardly," and "a sin against Islam." Many also expressed relief that none of the bombers were Jordanian. Initial statements by Islamist-leaning MPs Khalil Ateyeh (West Banker, Amman) and Abdullah al-Akayleh (East Banker, Tafliah) that such bombings were acceptable against "occupiers," but not against Jordanians, were quickly silenced by the popular mood.

[1](#)3. (C) Public anger over the bombings has translated into a surge of patriotism and support for the monarch. Rallying around their King, thousands of Jordanians have demonstrated peacefully around the country against the attacks. Along with placards calling for "Death to Zargawi!", many demonstrators carried pictures of King Abdullah and pledged their support for Jordan's security forces. Many of these events were arranged by the government, but many others were reportedly spontaneous in nature or organized by traditional opposition groups, such as the Islamist-dominated professional associations. The enthusiasm and sustained nature of the demonstrations could not have resulted from GID choreography. Countless Jordanians have affixed flags and others symbols of the country to their homes and cars. In a special session of parliament on November 12, lower house Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali declared that "the attacks have enhanced the Jordanian people's unity and steadfastness behind their Hashemite leadership." A few liberal contacts have privately expressed concern that the surge of nationalism will lead society and government to become less tolerant of dissent, but for now these concerns are absent from the media.

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A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE?  
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[1](#)4. (C) The hotel bombings may signal a turning point in the Jordanian public's attitude toward al-Qaeda and the Iraqi insurgency. According to post contacts and press editorials, the killing of innocent Muslims in the blasts, especially the carnage wrecked on the Da'as-Alami wedding at the Radisson, was an eye-opener for the mainly poor and intensely religious Jordanians who had condoned al-Qaeda terrorist operations in Iraq and elsewhere. For example, Dr. Dureid Mahashneh - businessman, lecturer, and negotiator for the Jordan-Israel peace treaty - told polcouns that many Jordanians who once sympathized with the so-called resistance in Iraq might now re-assess their views. He doubted, however, that there would be any change of opinion among Jordanians who see suicide attacks against Israelis as justifiable. Deputy Speaker of

the Chamber of Deputies Mamdouh Abbadi (East Banker - Amman) told reporters that the number of al-Qaeda sympathizers in Jordan "went down, down, and down some more" after the November 9 bombings. Similarly, columnist and political analyst Jamil Nimri said that support for al-Qaeda in Jordan "is going to dwindle tremendously."

15. (U) In a new survey published by independent Arabic daily al-Ghad on November 16, 87.1% of the 1,014 adult respondents - chosen to be demographically representative of the country - said they believed that al-Qaeda was a "terrorist organization," compared to 7.4% who held the opposite view. Roughly 78% and 13% of respondents had, respectively, a "very negative" or "somewhat negative" opinion of al-Qaeda, while 5.4% had a "very" or "somewhat" positive opinion. Approximately 64% said their views on al-Qaeda had changed for the worse after the November 9 bombings; 65% responded that the bombings would not negatively impact public life in Jordan.

16. (U) Dr. Musa Shtui, sociology professor and director of the Jordanian Center for Social Studies, told al-Ghad that the public's view of al-Qaeda had shifted "radically" following the November 9 attacks. Past opinion polling in Jordan had shown strong support for al-Qaeda because of its defiance of deeply unpopular American and Israeli policies in the region. According to Shtui, the hotel bombings, however, had forced Jordanians to see first-hand the "criminal nature" of the organization and had exposed its underlying ideology.

17. (SBU) Not everyone in Jordan has blamed Islamic extremists for the attacks. A few fringe Jordanians, seizing on a Ha'aretz report (subsequently withdrawn) that Israelis were evacuated from the Days Inn before/before the blasts, choose to see the Mossad's hands in the bombings. Member of parliament Neriman al-Rusan (East Banker, Irbid) told Al Jazeera that the Amman bombings - as well as the September 11 attacks in the U.S. - were "Israeli crimes carried out by the Mossad." Jordan Bar Association President Saleh Armouti also indirectly blamed on Israel, stating that "the only one profiting from these (terrorist) actions is the Zionist enemy." Columnist Fakhri Kavar in Arabic daily al-Rai wrote that "what al-Qaeda is doing in terms of violent actions against innocent people ... confirms the fact that there are secret liaisons between the leadership of al-Qaeda and the

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leadership of the Mossad."

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STILL WARY OF U.S.  
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18. (SBU) While some contacts believe the current surge in public support for the regime may make it easier for the GOJ to defend its cooperation with the U.S. in fighting terror, several analysts note that the outcry against the Amman bombings does not signal a shift in support for the U.S. MP Abbadi told the press, "There is no relation between people's feelings about U.S. policies in the region and their rejection of terrorism; the latter will not affect the former."

19. (SBU) A few voices are also trying to connect the attacks with U.S. positions on Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Arabic weekly al-Sabeel, which reflects the views of the Muslim Brotherhood, denounced the hotel attacks but at the same time urged that "resistance to the American onslaught against our nation should continue. This onslaught is the objective reason for what happened." Columnist Yaser Za'atreh in Arabic daily al-Dustour similarly wrote that although "blind violence" must be condemned, actions of "the legitimate resistance (to occupation) are required and must be praised." These views, however, have been strongly refuted by the GOJ and other opinion leaders. Former Minister of Information Saleh Qallab wrote in al-Ghad, for example, that "holding the American occupation in Iraq responsible for the crime against the hotels ... would be as good as justifying what happened, conspiring with the terrorists who perpetrated this heinous crime, and eliminating condemnation (against them)."

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ANTI-TERRORISM MEASURES  
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110. (U) Interior Minister Awni Yarvas announced on November 15 that the GOJ was issuing new regulations aimed at preventing foreign militants from operating within Jordan. These include a requirement that all Jordanians who rent property or "give refuge" to any foreigner provide police with the names, nationalities, and passport numbers of the foreign nationals, along with the purpose and duration of their stay in Jordan. Yarvas also stated that the GOJ would draft tough new legislation to combat terrorism that would prohibit individuals or organizations from "promoting takfiri

ideology" or "attempting to justify" terrorist acts in any country. The King told Ambassador that all penalties would be financial; he would not tolerate prison sentences except in cases of witting assistance for terrorism.

11. (C) The Islamist-dominated opposition parties have already expressed concern over the proposed new anti-terror law, stating publicly that there are presently enough security laws on the books. Some post contacts are also wary of the possible misuse of such legislation. Dr. Muhammed Kheir Mustafa, political analyst and professor of political science, expressed his fear to polcouns that the security services might accuse those attempting to analyze political violence of justifying terrorism under the proposed law. He further expressed his view that the palace had "hijacked" Jordanian anger over the bombings and turned it into a "festival" of "a cult of the King's personality."

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WHAT NEXT?  
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12. (C) While Jordanian unity in the wake of November 9 has been remarkable, several post contacts expressed concern over the prospect of a sustained campaign of attacks, and the effect on the country's stability and morale. Several also expressed concern at the economic fallout (septel). In post's view, Jordan is experiencing a moment of national unity, and support for the King, that is unprecedented since King Abdullah's accession in 1999.  
HALE